

May 7, 2020

Ms. Elaine Chao
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington DC 20590

Dear Secretary Chao:

I write to offer my full support for the Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration's (MDOT SHA) application for Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant funding for the *MD 5 Great Mills Improvement Project*. This critical rural project aligns strongly with the primary selection criteria providing significant safety, state of good repair, economic competitiveness, environmental sustainability, and quality of life benefits to the Southern Maryland region.

The *MD 5 Great Mills Improvement Project* will add two outside travel lanes, bicycle lanes, and sidewalks, as well as replace the bridge over the St. Mary's River between MD 246 and MD 471. Currently, MD 5 between MD 246 and MD 471 experiences long traffic queues during the peak travel period, creating congestion and safety concerns, with a crash rate significantly higher than the statewide average for similar routes. New commercial and residential developments planned near the community of Great Mills will generate higher traffic volumes by 2040 producing failing levels of service along MD 5.

Additionally, the county in which the project is located, St. Mary's County, has the fastest-growing workforce in the State of Maryland. An April 2019 Forbes article stated that "...California-Lexington Park in Maryland emerged as the city with the highest share of high-tech jobs in its local economy in the country."

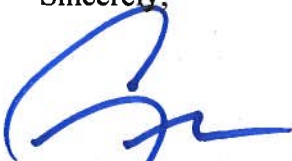
The high concentration of STEM jobs in this region is driven by the presence of several military installations in Southern Maryland. The Patuxent River Naval Air Station is three miles East of the project area and Naval Air Station Webster Field and Coast Guard Station St. Inigoes are located 11 miles to the South. These installations alone employ 18,000 active-duty, civilians, and contractors, many of whom rely on MD 5 for access to destinations around Washington, D.C. and Maryland, as well as in the event of a State or national emergency.

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I urge you to favorably consider this important project and invest in MDOT's efforts to advance this regionally significant rural project. The application represents the strong partnership among MDOT SHA, St. Mary's County, Patuxent River Naval Air Station, with other federal, state, and local partners to increase safety and further expand economic opportunity in rural Southern Maryland.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact Ms. Heather Murphy, MDOT Office of Planning and Capital Programming (OPCP) Director, at 410-865-1275 or by email at hmurphy@mdot.state.md.us. Of course, you may always contact me directly.

Sincerely,



Gregory Slater
Secretary

cc: Ms. Heather Murphy, Director, OPCS, MDOT

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bcc: Ms. Samantha Biddle, Chief Strategy Officer, MDOT
Thomas J. Curtin, Esq., Chief of Staff, MDOT
Mr. R. Earl Lewis, Jr., Deputy Secretary of Policy, Planning, and Enterprise Services,
MDOT
Ms. Michelle Martin, Deputy Director, OPCP, MDOT
Mr. Sean Powell, Deputy Secretary, Operations and Homeland Security, MDOT
Mr. Jeff Stockdale, Federal Legislative Officer, MDOT
Mr. Jeff Tosi, Director, Office of Government Affairs, MDOT